After this agreement, the Indian as well as Thai scheduled carriers can deploy more additional services on India-Thailand route.

(d) and (e) The designated airlines of both sides have now unlimited access to/form Lucknow and Varanasi in Uttar Pradesh.

Purchase of aircraft by Air India

1472. SHRI KALRAJ MISHRA:
SHRI R.P. GOENKA:

Will the Minister of CIVIL AVIATION be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that Air India has entered into an agreement with the Boeing Commercial Airplanes for purchase of 68 aircraft at an estimated cost of Rs. 35,000 crores;

(b) if so, the details thereof, including the type(s) and distinctive features of the new aircraft, phased programme drawn up for their delivery and arrangements settled, if any, for maintenance, repair and overhauling of the large number of new category of aircraft; and

(c) to what extent the new airplanes are expected to help achieve operational cost savings and expand the route network to combat the increasing competition?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF CIVIL AVIATION (SHRI PRAFUL PATEL): (a) and (b) Yes, Sir. Air India has signed a purchase agreement with Boeing Company for the purchase of 68 aircraft comprising 8XB777-200LR, 15XB777-300ER and 27XB787-8 all powered with GE engines for Air India and 18XB737-800W powered with CFM engines for Air India Charters Limited (a subsidiary of Air India) at an estimated cost of Rs. 34,615 crores.

The distinctive features of each aircraft and its delivery schedule are as under: (i) B777-200LR - A wide body ultra long range aircraft, configured with a 3-class layout having capability to fly non-stop flights from India to North America and will be equipped with the most modern in-flight entertainment system. Delivery of this aircraft will take place from February, 2007 to June, 2009; (ii) B777-300ER-A wide body long range aircraft configured with a 3-class layout, will be equipped with the most modern in-flight entertainment system. Delivery of this aircraft will take place from June, 2007 to August, 2011; (ii) B787-8 This aircraft is scheduled to enter into alirline's service in 2008 with a configuration of 2-class layout and will be equipped with the most modern in-flight entertainment system. Delivery

of aircraft will take place from September, 2008 to February 2012; and (iv) B737-800 - This is a standard body short haul new generation aircraft configured with all economy configuration. Delivery of aircraft will take place from December, 2006 to October, 2009.

Provision has already been made by Air India for the maintenance and overhaul facility and training infrastructure. Besides, M/s Boeing have also agreed to provide Maintenance, Repair and Overhaul (MRO) facilities for Boeing aircraft in India.

(c) Induction of modern new generation aircraft is expected to result inoperational cost savings mainly on account of lower fuel consumption and maintenance costs. Air India will deploy these aircraft for non-stop services to USA and on South Eastern/Gulf-Middle East and European sectors.

Pilots in Alliance Air

1473. SHRI AMAR SINGH:
SHIR ABU ASIM AZMI:

Will the Minister of CIVIL AVIATION be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that a large number of pilots and other trained staff like engineers have left the Alliance Air which has adversely affected the services of the company;

(b) if so, the number of persons who resigned from Alliance Air during the last two years;

(c) what is the existing strength of pilots in the Alliance Air and how many of them are in position at present; and

(d) the steps taken to retain the experienced persons in the Alliance Air and with what result?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF CIVIL AVIATION (SHR PRAFUL PATEL): (a) and (b) Yes, Sir. The number of pilots and technical personnel who have resigned from the services of Alliance Air since January, 2004 till date is 91 and 97 respectively.

(c) There are 25 Commanders, including 7 Expatriate Pilots and 38 Co-Pilots (including trainees) available with Alliance Air as on 28.02.2006.

(d) In an effort to retain the experianced persons in Alliance Air, their wages and perks have been revised and career progression planned. However, the efforts have not been very fruitful as pilots often get attracted to better pay and perks offered by other airlines.